Gaylord Specialty Healthcare

TESTIMONY OF
GAYLORD SPECIALTY HEALTHCARE
SUBMITTED TO THE
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Friday, March 21, 2014
HB 5583, An Act Concerning The Payment Of Real Property Taxes By
Certain Institutions Of Higher Learning And Hospital Facilities

Gaylord is writing to express concern regarding **HB 5583, An Act Concerning The Payment Of Real Property Taxes By Certain Institutions Of Higher Learning And Hospital Facilities** and urges the General Assembly to keep the current tax exemption and payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) funding structure in place.

Connecticut, like the rest of the nation, enacted the property tax exemption for hospitals many years ago in recognition of the unique and critically important role hospitals play in their communities.

For 112 years, Gaylord has served Connecticut's most fragile patients – those who have experienced an acute illness or life-altering event such as spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury and stroke. We care for patients with complex illnesses, multiple system failures, ventilator care & weaning, pulmonary care and complex wound care. These patients require significant levels of clinical care and participate in specialized treatment programs with the goal of medical recovery, improved function through rehabilitation and the ability to return to independence. The average length of stay is 25 days.

As a not-for-profit organization, one way that we accomplish our mission is by "giving back" to our community. Gaylord has an active Community Relations Committee that forges relationships with town government, grassroots organizations, advocacy groups and other healthcare providers to better identify and meet the health and socio-economic needs of our community. Gaylord sponsors free health education lectures for the community, focusing on issues of chronic disease/illness, disability and injury prevention. As of November, 119 employees had reported they had volunteered almost 500 hours on behalf of Gaylord within the community.

Another community benefit that reflects our mission to preserve and enhance a person's health and function is the Gaylord *Sports Association.* It provides adaptive sports and recreation programs to people with physical disabilities throughout Connecticut. It provides clinics, Discovery Nights, clubs and competitive teams so that people can *"get back into the game of life"*. These activities include golf, kayaking, skiing, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair tennis, water-skiing and sailing just to name a few. Many if not all activities are at little or no cost to the participant. Gaylord also runs a veteran-only program for those disabled by service to our country.

Gaylord is also one of the largest employers in the Wallingford/Meriden area.

The commitment of Gaylord and other hospitals to their respective communities has not wavered, even when patients cannot afford the care that is rendered. The quality has not diminished even though the financial burdens imposed on hospitals by the federal and state governments have grown increasingly unbearable.

The financial burden of paying property taxes to local governments, coupled with the adverse impacts of both the federal government reimbursement reductions and state funding cuts, threaten Gaylord's ability to provide care to those who need it.

Connecticut enacted the PILOT program to support cities and towns. Gaylord understands that municipalities are also under financial strain. We applaud the Governor's efforts to increase funding to the PILOT program, which will provide them with additional needed relief. But we cannot support a proposal that would make Connecticut hospitals liable for the payment of real property taxes and establish a state grant program to reimburse such tax payments.

Connecticut hospitals cannot endure another tax. We urge you to keep the current tax exemption and PILOT funding structure in place.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information on the burdens to Connecticut hospitals, please contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.